

December 5, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for your response letter in July on the issue of designating certain Mexican cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). We are appreciative of and encouraged by the Administration's recent statements regarding plans to deem these groups as such. Recent events remind us of the need to address the threat they pose, which is why we write today to strongly urge the Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism to label these groups as FTOs as expediently as possible. While there are many of these criminal entities present in Mexico, four major cartels use extreme terrorist tactics to exert both political and economic influence throughout the country. As a result, the Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco New Generation, the Gulf Cartel, and Los Zetas Cartel endanger United States citizens and threaten our country's national security. This designation would help U.S. efforts to limit the groups' power and control and protect American citizens.

These four cartels meet the three criteria required to be labeled as FTOs by the U.S. government. All are based in and operated from different regions within Mexico, meeting the standard that they must be foreign entities. Cartels engage in several of the terrorist activities defined under Section 212 (a)(3)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (8 U.S.C. §1182(a)(3)(B)), another requirement for the State Department to designate an organization. There are countless cases of these groups kidnapping individuals as well as using various types of weapons to harm civilians to name a few examples.

The goal of these four cartels' attacks is that of a terror group - to instill fear and exert as much power and control over the Mexican people and their government as possible. Unfortunately, employing more heinous tactics has led to their increasing success. In fact, a map recently prepared by the Mexican government and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to fight organized crimes shows that over 80% of regions are either in disputed or complete cartel control, with many of the areas being key smuggling routes and border towns.

Perhaps the most important criterion to be labeled as an FTO is threat to the security of U.S. nationals and economic interests of our nation. There is substantial risk to American lives from these four organizations. In fact, the State Department issued a 'Do Not Travel' Advisory for five Mexican states, including one that shares a 230-mile border with the United States, due to

risk of violent crime such as homicide, kidnapping and more – the same level as Syria and Afghanistan.

The most recent activity from these cartels highlights how their acts affect the American public and serves as an impetus for writing to you today. Earlier this month, three American mothers and their six children were ambushed and killed by the Sinaloa Cartel in the Mexican state of Sonora. This brutal attack follows the international outrage earlier this year after a string of violent attacks and murders in resort towns where tourists regularly visit such as Cancun and Tulum.

As sponsors and cosponsors of H.R. 1700, a bill calling for designating certain cartels as FTOs, we are confident this action will help to weaken the groups and combat their illicit activities. As demonstrated above, these organizations engage a wide range of crimes through various terror tactics and activities. If the cartels are classified as FTOs, it would provide a legal justification to prosecute someone for knowingly providing “material support or resources” to the four cartels and would also require financial institutions to freeze all assets of the groups. Additionally, once these cartels are labeled as an FTO, their members are inadmissible to the U.S. and under certain circumstances are removable from the U.S – something we all agree should be done.

Thank you for your work over the last year and a half to advance American interests abroad and protect our nation from a wide range of existential risks. Cartels engage in a wide range of crimes, from kidnapping and murder to human trafficking and drug smuggling, and we again thank the Administration for indicating plans to label these groups what they are: terrorist organizations. Doing so as quickly as possible would be a major step forward to protect U.S. national security and save American citizens’ lives. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Walker
Member of Congress

Chip Roy
Member of Congress

Mark E. Green, M.D.
Member of Congress